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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIRUT 001407

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA  
ALSO FOR IO ACTING A/S HOOK, PDAS WARLICK  
P FOR DRUSSELL AND RRANGASWAMY  
USUN FOR KHALILZAD/WOLFF/SCHEDLBAUER  
NSC FOR ABRAMS/RAMCHAND/YERGER/MCDERMOTT

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SUBJECT: LEBANON: HARIRI MEETS HIZBALLAH'S REPS; WILL SEE  
NASRALLAH AFTER "VISIBLE PROGRESS"

REF: BEIRUT 1375

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs a.i. William K. Grant for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

1. (C) Ghattas Khoury, advisor to majority leader Saad Hariri, provided a readout to Charge on September 25 of the previous day's meeting when Hizballah MP Mohammed Raad led a delegation to invite Hariri to meet Hizballah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah. Raad urged Hariri to meet with Nasrallah. Hariri expressed his willingness to meet Nasrallah to end Shia-Sunni clashes, emphasizing that he is not interested in a larger political agreement. He conditioned such a meeting, said Khoury, on progress on the ground, including a decrease in violence. Khoury suspected Hizballah's eagerness for the meeting was driven by a fear of Israel; i.e., not wanting to have bad relations with Lebanese if Hizballah is engaged in a clash with Israel. Hariri also demanded that Hizballah take down its political posters, noting that he had agreed to do the same. Khoury expected that the two would not meet until after Ramadan (ending on/around September 30), adding that Hariri should accommodate Nasrallah's security concerns by agreeing to any location.

2. (C) Khoury was unconcerned about the recent buildup of Syrian troops along the northern Lebanese-Syrian border. In advance of the September 27 scheduled parliamentary debate on the electoral law, Khoury reported that the March 14 alliance would convene to agree on a common position. End summary.

HIZBALLAH TO SUNNIS:  
WE BOTH MADE MISTAKES

3. (C) Reading from typed notes, Ghattas Khoury, senior advisor to majority and Sunni leader Saad Hariri, recounted for Charge Grant and PolOff, a play-by-play of Hariri's September 24 meeting with Hizballah. According to Khoury, the delegation's visit, led by MP Mohammed Raad, was the first time Hizballah officials have visited the Hariri residence Qoreitem since paying condolence calls after former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri's assassination in February 2005.

4. (C) Khoury quoted Raad as saying that Hizballah and Hariri should find a solution because the situation cannot stay as

it is. Raad reportedly stressed that Hizballah did not have negative intentions against Hariri. Referring to the May clashes, Raad asserted that Hizballah had made some mistakes, adding that Hariri was also guilty of making mistakes. Hariri reportedly categorized his mistakes as different from those of Hizballah.

HARIRI DOES NOT WANT  
POLITICAL DEAL WITH  
HIZBALLAH  
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15. (C) According to Khoury, Raad insisted that Hizballah wanted the "best relations possible" with Hariri, but complained that the media and the public's mood were working against the organization. Khoury said Hariri stressed that he was not interested in any deal or political agreement, but was focused on stopping the violence between Sunnis and Shias in the streets. "The only political agreement we want to see implemented is the Taif accord," Hariri stated.

16. (C) After Raad urged Hariri to meet Hizballah SYG Hassan Nasrallah, who possesses "all of the solutions," Hariri purportedly responded that it was not important to meet Nasrallah. "The important thing," Hariri said, "is for people to feel there is a solution to the fighting." Khoury explained that Hizballah is most concerned about an Israeli threat and therefore is looking to get its domestic house in order. Hariri cautioned Raad that Hizballah should therefore avoid civil strife because that was precisely what played into Israeli interests.

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17. (C) "I am not asking for an apology for what happened in May," Hariri reportedly told Raad, adding, "The people will judge who was right in the parliamentary elections. If the people determine that you are right, then you will become the government and we will be the opposition."

NO MORE POLITICAL POSTERS  
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18. (C) Raising the issues of political posters, Hariri reported to Raad that he had agreed with Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri to remove all posters. Raad responded that Hizballah was also willing to remove political paraphernalia.

STREET FIGHTING MUST  
STOP BEFORE A MEETING  
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19. (C) Hariri expressed his willingness to meet Nasrallah, but conditioned it on seeing a decrease in violence in Beirut and the Bekaa. (Note: Khoury explained that while Hizballah was also blamed by some for the violence in Tripoli, it does not in reality have influence over the Alawites who clashed with Sunnis in that area. Therefore, he said, Hariri was expecting progress only in Beirut and the Bekaa. End note.) In addition to the removal of political posters and a decrease in violence, Hariri also demanded the implementation of the security aspects of the Doha agreement and a declaration of the airport road as a "free zone."

110. (C) Khoury concluded that Hariri would meet Nasrallah soon, but because he wanted progress first, a meeting should not be expected until after Ramadan (ending on/around September 30). He noted that Nasrallah had hoped for a meeting as soon as possible. Khoury speculated that Hizballah will indeed carry out good faith measures because it was sincerely interested in an agreement with Hariri. "Plus," Khoury said, "a deal with Hariri will give Hizballah a big boost in the public's eye." Khoury acknowledged that Hariri's Sunni supporters do not want Hariri to talk to Hizballah, but at the same time, they are very concerned about their security.

WHERE TO MEET?

11. (C) Remarking that President Michel Sleiman had hoped for an immediate meeting between Hariri and Nasrallah, Khoury said it was not possible because Nasrallah was not willing to go to the Presidential Palace out of security concerns (reftel). Khoury said he recognized that Hariri could not suggest a location, and relayed that he was advising Hariri to go anywhere Hizballah proposed. "Otherwise," he speculated, "if Israel killed him, we would surely be blamed!"

UNCONCERNED BY  
SYRIAN DEPLOYMENT

12. (C) Khoury said emphatically that he did not believe the recent deployment of Syrian troops along the northern Lebanese/Syrian border signaled any preparation for an invasion. He claimed that some Syrian troops were killed recently when combating smugglers, which prompted the deployment. He explained that some of his March 14 allies had made a fuss about it in the news, but only to win points from the voting public.

UNITING MARCH 14 PRIOR  
TO ELECTORAL LAW DEBATE

13. (C) In preparation for parliament's September 27 debate on the electoral law, Khoury said March 14 members were trying to reach an agreement on a position. Khoury explained that they agreed on almost everything except the issue of amending the clause requiring mayors to resign two years before they become eligible to run for parliament. Khoury

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said Hariri and Druze leader Walid Jumblatt wanted to amend the clause to allow the Mayor of Deir al Kamar, Dory Chamoun, to run in the elections after a six-month resignation. According to Khoury, the Lebanese Forces opposed amending the clause because they believed Chamoun's candidacy would replace one of their own, MP George Adwan.

HARIRI STILL MOST  
POPULAR SUNNI LEADER

14. (C) Khoury downplayed the popularity of Tripoli politicians including former PMs Najib Mikati and Omar Karami, MP Mosbah Ahdab, and Economy and Trade Minister Mohammed Safadi. He stressed that Hariri still retained the support of about 70 percent of the Sunnis nationwide, noting that the Tripolitans' popularity was localized.

GRANT